



Marvel Masterworks: The Amazing Spider-Man, Vol. 4

Stan Lee

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Collects Amazing Spider-Man #31-40.

As Spider-Man struggles to stop the crime spree of the Master Planner (secretly Dr. Octopus) and his men, he ends up buried under a collapsed water tower! See Spidey use his strength as never before to get free! Peter Parker tries balancing his new life at college and his Aunt May's ailing health! Ned Leeds wants to marry Betty Brant, but she's still got feelings for her old flame, Peter, who's too preoccupied to even notice his beautiful new classmate Gwen Stacy! Spidey tangles with old foes like Kraven the Hunter and the Molten Man, and new ones like the Looter, a Guy Named Joe, and Mendel Stromm! And when the Green Goblin attacks, he learns Spider-Man is Peter Parker, then reveals himself as Norman Osborn, father of Peter's classmate, Harry!

Marvel Masterworks: The Amazing Spider-Man, Vol. 4 Details

Marvel Masterworks: The Amazing Spider-Man, Vol. 4 (Marvel Masterworks: The Amazing Spider-Man #4)

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Aaron says

This volume collecting ASM 31 to 40 from 1965-66 includes Peter's enrollment in college, the introduction of Gwen Stacy, Harry Osborn, and Norman Osborn, the opening issues where Pete seems to face his greatest challenge yet, and the final issues containing the revelation of who wears the Green Goblin mask. I still found it hard to get past Stan Lee's cheesy dialogue and Pete's jerky reactions to people who eventually became his friends, but both of these are toned down by the last few issues. It might also be a bit of blasphemy, but I also found the switch in art from Steve Ditko to John Romita in issue 39 a definite improvement.

David Dalton says

What a great collection! The final issues by Steve Ditko and the first two John Romita Sr issues.

The classic 3-issue storyline with the Master Planner (Doc Ock) and the great showdown with the Green Goblin. All pivotal issues in the Spider-Man legend. My digital library has the next Spider-Man Masterworks. Brings me back to the late sixties. Classic art and fantastic stories.

Michael says

A lot of good and/or important stuff in this volume. Peter starts college after graduating in Vol. 3 and we meet Harry Osborn and Gwen Stacy for the first time. Aunt May is sick (again; they love this plot device) and Peter is super worried, so he's pretty much sleepwalking through his classes and blowing off everything and everyone else. Harry and Gwen meet Flash Thompson before they meet Peter, and Flash's badmouthing Peter couples with Peter's distracted inattention to make Harry and Gwen think that Peter is stuck up and intentionally ignoring them. Harry is a jerk right away and even Gwen comes across as insecure and self-absorbed after giving Peter the barest of chances at first.

Frankly though, Stan Lee writes *everyone* this way, including Peter, and it's rough finding someone to connect to. I've always heard that part of Peter's charm is how relatable he is, and clearly that's what Lee and Ditko are going for, but I'm irritated with Peter most of the time. As the stories progress, Gwen bounces between attracted to Peter and annoyed by him. He doesn't help his situation the way he treats her.

Speaking of insecure and super annoying, Betty Brant is written out for a while. Ned Leeds proposes to her, but she can't accept without some closure with Peter, which he refuses to give, because he can't bring himself to officially cut her free even though he also won't let anything progress with her. Not that he should. They're a horrible, toxic couple. Betty's exit would be a relief, except that Peter constantly thinks and worries about her. And by the end of the volume, she's already heading back to New York to try to get her job back. The best thing about her leaving is a running gag about how Jonah Jameson can't find a replacement who'll put up with his crap.

One of the classic stories collected here is Spider-Man's being trapped under an enormous pile of rubble as water rises, threatening to drown him before he can secure some life-saving medicine for Aunt May. This is a story that I've always heard was super powerful (and was even modified and included in *Spider-Man: Homecoming*, but it may have been built up too much for me. I enjoyed the drama of the situation, but didn't feel the punch I expected.

Harry's dad Norman is introduced this volume and immediately revealed to be the Green Goblin in the very next issue. I expected more build-up, probably because of how the story unfolds in the first Raimi Spider-

Man movie. It's cool how the Norman and Goblin stories come together, but Norman is as much of a jerk as Harry, so there's no betrayal or emotional impact.

There is some heft though to the development when Norman discovers that Peter is Spider-Man. Spidey actually has to wrestle with the idea of murdering Norman to protect himself and Aunt May. The decision is taken out of his hands when Norman loses his memory, so that kind of sucks, but I love how Peter immediately not only saves Norman's life, but also covers up his connection to Green Goblin so that Norman and Harry can be reunited. And I haven't mentioned an earlier scene in which Peter and Harry cease hostilities long enough to realize that they both have big problems and probably don't actually mean to hurt each other.

There are enough moments like that to keep me invested and make me really like the volume in spite all of my complaining above. The art is great of course and for the first time I noticed the similarities between Ditko's art and Todd McFarlane's. I was late getting into McFarlane back in the day and not familiar with Ditko at the time, but the inspiration is super clear. And by the end of this volume, John Romita has taken over. His is the look I grew up with, so I'm very excited to Volume 5.

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From reader reviews:

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